

# Penelope Hosh and the Man from the Mirror

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Summary: At the age of 15, Penelope Hosh is thrown into the world of demigods. Trouble is brewing beyond the safety of camp borders, and Penelope is given a prophecy: Spill what is thicker than water, Peers will label them a rotter, Find an enemy you can't defeat, With things like bronze, mist, or heat, Olympus will change when two become one, Through ascension this quest will be done.

## 1. Chapter 1

\*\*Hey guys, I'm back, and with a new story. Some of my friends and I have been rping together, and they managed to convince me to write this story. I hope you guys enjoy~3\*\*

"Are you sure you packed everything, Penelope? Money? Snacks? Underwear?" I lifted my head up from the car window and looked at my mother. My best friend, Kelsey Moore, had promised me a long and exciting day of summer camp fun, and I was trying to get a nap in so that I would be well rested and ready to play, but as the car ride went on it was clear I wouldn't be getting any sleep with my mother's constant questioning.

"Yes, ma'am," I responded, patting the two giant suitcases in the back seat. My mother was a sweet and simple lady, her wavy black hair usually in a messy low bun and her plain T-shirt and jean combo allowed her to blend in with every other mother in the world. However, at times like these I swore Mother was going out of her way to embarrass me in front of my friend. Kelsey, was sitting comfortably in the passenger seat. The blonde looked up from the roadmap she held in her hands to smirk back at me. Kelsey enjoyed watching me get flustered almost as much as my mother enjoyed making me this way. I was glad my skin was just dark enough so that my blush wasn't visible.

It was the beginning of summer, and school was finally out. Kelsey invited me to come to an out of state summer camp with her. Being the only friend I made this year, I didn't want to turn her down.

Accepting the invitation was easy, but getting the permission to go was hard. You see, even though my mother was so simple and sweet, she was also very strict and more paranoid than I was. I wasn't allowed to stay out late, or go to slumber parties because Mother was afraid that I'd get drugged, kidnapped, and sold into child slavery. That being said, asking for permission to go to a summer camp that was out of state and filled with unfamiliar teens was like, asking a teacher to round up your grade. I'd have to pull a lot of strings and do a lot of butt kissing. Finally after a month of cleaning the entire house every day, keeping the peace with my stepbrothers, and doing an entire presentation about why I should go, I reached the cusp of her agreeing to let me go. What tipped her over the edge was my stepfather, Jacob Hosh. Initially I was surprised her wanted to let me go because he had taken up the role of overprotective father, but then I realized the step brothers would also be going on a big road trip with their friends at that time, leaving Jacob and Mother alone for at least a month. Thinking about what could occur in that month made me want to gag, so I tried to focus on the activities I'd participate in.

"Do you have your cellphone?" Mother asked.

"Yes, ma'am," I replied, doing my best not to show the look of displeasure on my face. My "cellphone", if one could even call it that, was a cheap go-phone that was wired so that I could only call home or 911. Mother claimed that I didn't need an iPhone or Android like all the other kids my age, which technically was true, but it didn't stop me from feeling a fresh wave of embarrassment every time I had to whip it out to call home.

"Ah, turn left up here," Kelsey directed. Mother did so. I grinned and tugged at the ends of my black gloves in excitement. We were getting closer and closer to the rendezvous point where I would meet another camper who would take us to the camp. This was my very first time going to any sort of summer camp, and being away from Mother for more than a week. An odd tingle made me glance up, and when I did my gold eyes met my mother's brown ones. She was watching me intently like an owl looking for any sort of danger. I felt my smile drop, and I stopped pulling at my gloves. Mother's attention turned back to the road.

"Mind the rules," I had said it in my mind, but with Mother's voice. I turned back to the window, watching as outside seemed to whip past our van. My rules were these.

1. No inappropriate clothing or hairstyles
2. Never talk back to those in authority and are above you
3. No extracurricular events mother hasn't approved of
4. No friends that mother hasn't approved of
5. Never ever take your gloves off in public

There were other minor rules like not having a boyfriend before the age of 16, and don't agree to things you can't finish, but those five were the major ones that I had to follow for a long time. I never really asked why the rules were instated for the fear that it would break rule number two, but I expected it was because of the series

odd occurrences that had started when I was 8.

For instance, at one of my old houses, I could have sworn I saw one of their new neighbors' silhouette through their window at night. They had a long, spiked tail and gnarly claws. Mother said I was just imagining it, but soon after a freak fire had started and almost burned our house down. The firefighters who came said it had started from over by that neighbor's yard. After that we moved to Georgia. But, that was just the beginning. Every time we moved, I kept seeing more and more things that I don't think I should have. Finally, we moved to Texas last year. Mother met Jacob and his two kids, and the rest is history.

"Hey, Pen!" Kelsey snapped her fingers in front of my face. I blinked back into the present, and realized the car had stopped.

"We're here," Kelsey chirped, bright blue eyes sparking. We were parked at a gas station. It was one of those stations that felt like it was in the middle of nowhere, and you just knew the bathrooms within was home to its fair share of roaches. And, to top it off it was also connected to a fast food restaurant. With the exception of a rusty pale blue truck with some kind of field equipment in the back, the vicinity was empty. Mother was looking around, for the person who was supposed to be our ride.

>"What did you say your friend looked like, Kelsey?" she asked, her eyes falling on a greasy man eating a burger who had just stepped out of the McDonalds. As he walked to his blue car, mustard dripped from the bottom of his burger, and landed on his green shirt. Upon noticing it he simply shrugged and continued eating. Mother grimaced. She was very into healthy eating and organic foods. Even candy had restrictions, which made Halloween a very sad time. Mother looked at me and I quickly made a look of disgust.<br>"Ugh, all that greasy fast food. Doesn't he know it clogs your arteries," I moaned. Mother smiled proudly. She turned to Kelsey.

>"I'm a vegetarian," Kelsey said beaming, "I can't even begin to imagine those poor animals at the filthy factories just waiting to be slaughtered. Oh! I read this one article where..." And she was off. One of Kelsey's many talents was to put people to sleep with her long and drawn out stories. I spaced out again, waiting for the sound of her voice to stop.<p>

"Oh! There he is!" Kelsey alerted, her story finally coming to a halt. She pointed outside the window to a bright red sports car that had just pulled up.

"Alright, let's go," Kelsey smiled. She opened the door and looked back at me. For some reason when we locked eyes I felt a little bit unsettled.

\_"She did something, didn't she,"\_ I thought to myself. It wasn't uncommon for the girl to play pranks on me, and I didn't see why she wouldn't play one now. Before I could say anything both she and my mother were out of the car and walking to the new arrival.

"Let's hope it's not too bad," I sighed, unbuckling my seatbelt. I hopped out the car, and folded my seat down in a way that I would be able to reach Kelsey and my suitcases. Kelsey's was stacked underneath mine, so I pulled on the handle of her suitcase to see if I could pull them both out at once. You know, killing two birds with one stone.

"Gnnrgh," I grunted, half despising my friend for ditching me to do the dirty work. The suitcases were heavy with the clothes and supplies we packed. I had managed to pull the suitcases to the edge of the seat when I heard a voice speak.

"Need help?" I yelped and jumped back, dropping both suitcases. The boy who had just appeared behind me, moved quickly and caught the bags.

"Whoa, these are heavy. A bit surprised you could lift them," The boy joked. I laughed along nervously, and looked him up and down. I couldn't believe it. Rory Walsh, the hottest boy in my grade, was standing in front of me. Talking to me. I nervously started tugging on the ends of my gloves again.

"It's okay. Just be cool," I thought to myself. But cool, I was not.

"Uuuuh, yeah it was a stra-struggle," I stammered.

"Dammit." I mentally slapped myself in the face. "Rory isn't be our carpool by coincidence. Kelsey definitely planned this." But for some reason I couldn't stay mad. Rory is noticing me, and I was talking to him, something I wouldn't have been able to do myself if I tried. I gave a small smile. If Rory was beautiful at a distance, he was downright gorgeous up close. Rory had thick, choppy dark brown hair. He played a lot of sports for our school like football and track, which earned him a nice golden brown suntan over his well-toned body. A spray of freckles could be found on wherever skin was visible. To top it all off he had always wore dark eyeliner. I don't know why, but that made him ten times more attractive. Maybe it was because I listen to a lot of punk rock bands. Maybe it was because it highlighted his fixating brown eyes. Either way, the boy looked good. I did my best not to ogle as Rory easily lifted the two suitcases up and placed it on the ground before me.

"Thank you," I said quietly.

"Not a problem," he said, looking down at me, "Hey! You go to our school?" I could have sworn my eyes were glistening.

"Rory knew we went to school together?" All of those telepathic messages really did work. But now I had to pretend I don't stare at the back of his head for thirty minutes in study hall.

"Oh uh y-yeah. Jefferson's right? How'd you know?" I asked. Rory cracked a smile, and I tried to keep my heartbeat in check.

"Well you're wearing the school shirt." I felt my blood run cold, and my heart stopped. I slowly looked down to see that past my grey jacket, I was in fact wearing a dark blue t-shirt with our school's symbol on it. I smacked myself in the face with the palm of my hand.

"Oh my god," I groaned. I had managed to single handedly make a fool of myself to the cutest boy I knew. Rory chuckled which, although cute, amplified my embarrassment by fifty.

"Don't worry everybody forgets things," Rory said, patting me on the

back.

"Haha. Yeah," I replied, trying not to feel insulted that Rory was treating me like a child despite up being the same age.

"I will take these," Rory said, grabbing the suitcase handles, "and you can say goodbye to your mom."

"Yeah, okay," I said, following him around the car to where Mother and Kelsey were.

I scurried to my mother. I must have stepped too close to her because she took a step back.

"Uh well, goodbye mother," I said with a smile. She returned it, but her eyes made the look on her face unsettling. Her eyes were filled with worry.

"Do you think I'm going to do something bad?" I wanted to ask, but I was afraid of her response.

"Goodbye, Penelope. Do behave and remember the rules," Mother said.

"I always do," I replied. Mother stepped forward, and for a brief moment I thought she was going to hug me. No such thing happened, and she walked past me to her silver van.

"Not even a goodbye hug, huh?" Kelsey said, walking up behind me.

"Um, yeah," I said, rubbing my arms. "She knows I'm not really a touchy feely person, soâ€¦" I trailed off at the end of the sentence. Kelsey looked at me as if she were trying to figure out something, and the key lies somewhere within my eyes. In the end she didn't find anything but awkwardness, and just shrugged.

"Well, you know what I've got to say to that?" She asked.

"What?"

"I call shotgun!" She shouted before bolting to the door of the passenger's side of Rory's car.

"Oh. My. God. Kels," I groaned. The sound of the car trunk slamming, signaled that Rory was ready to go as well. I shuffled to the door of the back seat to find that the door was not a door, and there wasn't a handle for me to get in.

"Oh, you have to get in through the front," Rory said. He walked over, opened the front door, and pulled a lever that folded his chair forward, leaving just enough room for me to squeeze in.

"Thank you," I murmured, crawling in and plopping down on the tan leather seats. His car smelled sweet, like strawberries, and when I looked to the air freshener that was hanging from the rearview mirror I saw that my nose was right. Rory pulled his chair back and got in. He put his keys in the ignition and started the engine. Rory turned back to Kelsey and me.

"You ready to go?" he asked excitedly.

"Yeah!" Kelsey and I cheered in unison.

"Then let's go!" Rory put the car into gear and began to drive towards the road. I looked out the window and watched as my mother drove in the opposite direction. As her silver van got smaller and smaller in the horizon, I did my best to ignore the shadowy figure that was running in my peripheral vision.

## 2. Chapter 2

\*\*I found an email from two years ago with about four chapters worth of text which got me so excited. Not only am I able to read some of my old writing from a few years ago, but I'm also able to give y'all some chapters quicker. I hope y'all enjoy. The next few chapters are all thanks to Past Me.\*\*

"So, Penelope, I've been meaning to ask..." Rory started. I couldn't tell if he was genuinely curious about something, or if he was trying to make me lose this staring contest with Kelsey. We were three minutes in, and it was getting intense.

"Go on," I said, keeping my eyes wide. With Kelsey's help of breaking the ice for the past hour, I found it a lot easier to talk to Rory now. After a few stories about the things he did at camp on a dare, Rory somehow appeared more like a regular guy than the gorgeous celebrity-like image I made for him in my head. It was nice, and gave me hope that he would be able to see me in the same way I saw him.

"What was up with your mom not hugging you?" I felt my face contort into a more awkward expression. My eyes were burning from having them open for so long. Kelsey didn't look like she was ready to quit anytime soon, and I knew I couldn't lie about my mom stiff-arming me while staring her dead in the eye. A puff of breath was all it took to make Kelsey blink.

"Ah! Cheater!" she shrieked, rubbing her eyes. I blinked so hard that when I opened my eyes again I had to wait for them to readjust.

"You saw that too, huh?" I said, getting ready to regurgitate the same lie I told Kelsey. Before I could respond, Kelsey blurted out, "Pen just doesn't like to be touched!" A fresh burn poured over my cheeks.

"Shut up!" I hissed, smacking her lightly on the arm, "You're making me sound weird!" She shrugged.

"I just calls 'em like I sees 'em." I glowered at her. Sometimes, I wondered why I put up with her ribbing, but I knew it was because I couldn't retaliate. It wasn't that I wasn't good at retaliating- Well, it was that, too, but more importantly it was because I was trained not to. From a very young age, Mother had always taught me to just let things happen. I found that she was right in most situations. When you act out or push back against people, they tended to become agitated and more violent with their attacks. But, Kelsey wasn't a bully. She had always been kind, and never actually hurt me

with her teasing. Despite embarrassing me 9 out of 10 times we're in public, she made me feel like I was normal.

"Well, you're not getting any of the trail mix my mother packed," I countered. Kelsey was about to say something, but Rory interjected.

"One, no eating in my car. It smells fresh and I'd prefer it to stay that way. Two, trail mix? Seriously? That's not a snack. That's something you feed horses at the stable or squirrels in the forest." I gasped.

"You guys have horses too!?" I've only seen horses in books and videos. One of my friends in Georgia was obsessed with horses and would always tell me little facts about them, and stories about the horses on her grandparents ranch up in Oklahoma. I'd always been so amazed by the beasts in her tales, and now I might actually be able to see one in real life. Rory nodded.

"Yeah, something like that. Kelsey didn't fill you in?" He asked. Kelsey looked away, like the plains of dry grass outside the window suddenly got interesting.

"Kelsey," Rory said sternly, "What'd you tell her exactly?" Kelsey started rubbing her neck nervously.

"Er... Well, I did tell her...It's just, I didn't tell her...everything." Rory pinched the bridge of his nose. He raised an eyebrow and moved his gaze back to me.

"What'd she say?" Rory asked, voice lower than before. The hairs on the back of my neck to raise.

"U-um," I stammered, taking a deep breath to try to compose myself, "Well she just said that camp was really fun. And you guys play cool games like capture the flag and there's have a lake for canoeing and stuff like that." Rory glared accusingly at my friend.

"Skimmed the top again, huh?" Kelsey smiled back apologetically.

"Well, I didn't want to scare her and her mom. Or trigger anything into coming after us," Kelsey said quickly. She glanced back at Rory, saw his expression, and promptly turned back to the window. I tilted my head in confusion.

"\_\_Scare me? Coming after us? I wonder if maybe Mother was right about people waiting for the right opportunity to snatch me up."\_ I started to think that I wasn't going to a super fun summer camp, and maybe I was being kidnapped by criminals instead. I stopped that train of thought immediately as it was stupid and didn't make sense. It'd be impossible since I'd known Kelsey for a whole year, but then again, a few years ago a boy was kidnapped and forced to help his abductor. From what I remember there was some kind of shootout between the boy and his kidnapper. The boy was freed, but kidnapper was never caught. Many think the boy shot him and his body was carried off to sea. Could Rory and Kelsey be working for an abductor? I pulled at my gloves again. I started to feel anxious, like any moment a hand with a rag of chloroform would grab me and smother me.

"My mom's a cop, you know," I blurted out. Rory looked to me.

"Ha, yeah I know. She threatened to get me sentence to life if even a hair on your head was hurt." The corner of my mouth twitched up. That was something my mom would say. Kelsey seemed to sense my uneasiness.

"Don't worry. Everything will be explained once we get to camp."

"If you say so," I muttered. We continued to ride in silence for what felt like forever until Rory finally turned the radio on. It had been preset to the local rock station, so for the next hour we rode while listening to a bunch of bands ranging from my favorites to those who were vaguely familiar. When singing along in a tone-deaf harmony got boring, I suggested the we play the animal game, a game I created when I was in elementary school. There wasn't any cool rules or tricks to the game, you'd just take turns naming animals in alphabetic order until someone couldn't think of an animal with their letter or repeats an animal. We were on our third round, and Kelsey and Rory had just finished arguing over whether or not jackrabbit counted for 'J' when I saw a green rest stop sign fly past us.

"Uh, Rory, I need to use the restroom," I said, crossing my legs tightly for emphasis.

"Gotcha," Rory nodded, already turning to the exit point on the highway. "I've got to get some gas, too." He pulled up to a gas station much like the one he had picked us up from. This gas station, however, looked far less abandoned than the previous one. A few customers were filling up their tanks while others went into the station store no doubt to grab snacks or relieve themselves.

"Whoa McDonalds is everywhere!" Kelsey exclaimed.

"And water is wet," I shot back so quickly it even surprised me. Rory chuckled. Kelsey turned to me slowly and gave me a nasty look.

"Okay, Pen. I'll remember that," She said nodding.

"Oops," I laughed nervously, dreading the pranks Kelsey was no doubt coming up with now. Rory took the keys out of the ignition and opened his door.

"Get out and stretch your legs," he ordered, "If you have to use the restroom, go now because we won't be stopping for a long time."

"Okay, Dad," Kelsey mocked, sticking her tongue out teasingly to Rory. I laughed at Rory's scrunched up face until I realized I was a few seconds from peeing my pants.

"I have to go," I muttered before quickly running into the gas station. I looked down the aisles of snacks and drinks for any signs of the bathroom. Then, I caught a glimpse of a sign hanging from the ceiling. I moved closer to see it better. It was a little difficult to read due to my dyslexia but I knew it led to the bathroom because of the two pictures on the sides. The bathroom was exactly what I expected. It wasn't dirty, but it definitely wasn't clean. A faint



stench hung in the air, and water was all over the cream colored counter and gray tiled floors floor. At least, I hoped it was water. I made my trip quick, not wanting to stay in there for very long. As I washed my hands, I looked at myself in the mirror. Gold eyes reflected back at me. I knew I had an unusual eye color, and I used to want contacts to change them brown, but my mom said that contacts were too expensive and came with too many risks of me hurting my eyes. Jacob said they looked cool, which they were. They work awesome when I was give someone a death glare from afar or puppy dog eyes. Also they looked nice against my skin which was the shade of coffee if you poured vanilla cream in it. My eyes also stood out against my dark wavy hair. My hair texture was much different from many of the black girls who went to my school. Their hair was naturally springy and easily formed cute little afros and curls. Mine on the other hand was a long partially wavy mess that I had to frequently brush in the morning and at night. Mother said that these traits came from my father, a man who walked out on us before I could even remember him. She said he was killed by a group of gang members who would squat around the neighborhood we lived in when I was young. It was clear she resented him, and sometimes when I would catch her watching me in a certain way, I wondered if she felt the same way about me. I've tried to please her, to make her proud of me, but I'm not sure if what I'm doing is enough, and I don't know when it will be enough. I frowned and raised my hands to my face.

"The Devil's hands," I whispered, gold eyes wide and ominous.

The loud creak of the bathroom door made me jump. A young woman walked in. I cleared my throat, and quickly pretended I was not staring at myself in the mirror, which was stupid because that was what mirrors were for. I waved my hand over the automatic paper towel dispenser, but no paper came out. I looked into the transparent box to see if maybe there was a paper jam. Empty. I sighed and held my hands over the sink, letting the water drip off. I glanced at the woman who just walked in. She was tall with pitch black hair that was piled on top of her head. She had sharp cheekbones and thin black eyebrows that looked almost like they were drawn in. Her eyes were a bright green which matched her shimmering green dress. A tannish orange snake skin belt hung around her waist. She looked like she was ready to go to a fancy dinner party, not a gas station bathroom. When she saw me she watched me for a while. I looked around trying not to take notice, but her eyes seemed to burn into me the longer she stared. I could have sworn I saw her lick her lips, and I immediately wanted to leave, not caring about my wet hands. Unfortunately, she was standing in front of the door, so I put on my polite face and asked,

"Can I help you?"

"Maybe you can," she said her voice was soft and nurturing, like a mothers, yet cold. My skin prickled and my smile faded into a grimace. She smiled back at me, her lips stretched and curled back revealing sharp fangs instead of teeth. I began to panic as she swayed towards me. I clenched my fists, bottled up all my courage, and quickly ran towards her. I ducked at the last second, maneuvered just out of her grasp, and running out of the bathroom, not stopping until I reached the car outside. I was in such a hurry I forgot my gloves on the bathroom counter. I pulled the door of the passenger's side open and leaped in, not caring about Kelsey protesting beneath me. I fell to the backseat with a hard "thud". Kelsey and Rory, who

had been arguing over who knows what stopped what they were doing and looked at me.

"We have to go," I hissed through bared teeth, trying not to raise alarm. I kept an eye on the gas station's front door.

"Why?" Rory asked. Kelsey looked around. She must have seen what I had seen because her eyes went wide like mine.

"Monster," she said. Rory looked to her, then back to me. He reached in his pocket, but Kelsey grabbed his arm, stopping him.

"There are too many people."

"Why are we still here!?" I said, yelling now. There was no time to just sit here and wait until Fangs came for us.

"Sit back and put your seatbelt on," Rory ordered. I strapped myself in just as the woman from earlier pushed the gas station door open.

"GO! GO!" I screamed. Rory hit the gas pedal, and I was thrown back as we sped off.

\*\*What I found really funny when editing this was that originally Kelsey's character was a satyr boy named Scott who became best friends with Penelope much like how Grover was best bros with Percy. I feel bad that I took him out now, but maybe he'll make a cameo later. \*\*\*\*J\*\*

### 3. Chapter 3

\*\*The second chapter of the day! Aren't you guys lucky ducks. Enjoy~\*\*

Rory slowed back down once we had merged back onto the highway. After a few miles Rory spoke up.

"What happened?" he asked, concerned.

"I don't know," I said, still shaking, "I-I thought I saw something. She-she had fangs." I pressed my hands against my eyes so hard pink and white spots appeared. Now realizing I had forgotten my gloves a fresh wave of panic washed over me.

"Crap," I said under my breath.

\_"You've broken the most important rule."\_ I could practically hear my mother's disapproving voice. I closed my eyes and leaned back against the car seat.

"I'll be fine," I told myself. I gently stroked the scar on the inside of my right hand with the thumb of my left hand. It was crazy how weird things like this always happened. I stared up at the ceiling, feeling bad for my mom and everyone else who had to put up with me. I probably looked like the boy who cried wolf, always yelling about things people say they can't see. I'm scaring everybody over what was probably just my jacked up mind playing tricks on me. My eyes began to sting, as my negative emotions filled my mind, like

a dark cloud casted over an island. It took me a moment to realize that Kelsey was trying to talk to me. She had tapped my shoulder and I jolted back.

"Huh?" My voice was strained from my almost crying.

"I was asking what happened to your gloves. Are you okay? Your eyes are red." I rubbed my eyes with the back of my hands, and cleared my throat before speaking again.

"I'm fine, I'm just tired," I said in a rehearsed voice. "I left my gloves in the bathroom."

"Do you want me to turn back so you can go get them?" Rory asked. I quickly shook my head.

"I'll be fine," I said confidently. But, that wasn't true. Noting was fine when the Devil's hands were out.

"Why do you wear them anyway? It's summer which means in Texas it's super summer." I pursed my lips, unsure of whether or not to tell them the truth. I decided to lie. They treated me like I was normal now, and I wanted to keep things that way.

"I have poor circulation in my hands," I lied. It was my go to excuse for many people who've asked.

"Oh, okay then," Rory said. I sighed silently in relief.

"Seriously? I thought you had ugly hands or something," Kelsey jeered, an attempt to lighten the mood, "You'd never take them off, even when we dissected that frog in science class. Oh, I don't think I've ever told you that story, Rory. Okay so there we were with-" I cleared my throat loudly. Now wasn't the time to recall past events. I needed some answers. Kelsey seemed to understand. "Fine. Stories later."

"Earlier you said 'monster', Kelsey. Does that mean you see things, too?" Kelsey and Rory exchanged a glance. Kelsey rubbed the back of her neck again. I swear her neck must be raw from all that rubbing.

"Uh, Rory will explain." Rory shot her a dirty look but muttered 'fine'. His frown melted into a sneaky smirk. He opened the center console and retrieved a small zip up case. With one hand he opened it and inside were many CD's. He glanced down and pulled one out. He put it into the CD player, zipped the bag back up, put it back in the center console. He pressed play. Once again there was a short awkward silence before the sound of static filled the car. It died down and there was the muffled sound of someone tapping on something.

"It's on? Good." It was Rory's voice.

"Hi, my name is Rory Walsh and today I will be answering many of the questions you may have. I know you may be wondering, 'how do you know what questions I'm going to ask?'. Well that's simple. It's most likely that the person responsible for taking you to camp and answering any questions you may have is Kelsey or Mark who are practically lazy freeloaders who like to ramble a lot."

"Hey!" Kelsey exclaimed. I snickered.

"You do ramble," I agreed. Kelsey pouted and opened her mouth but was quickly shushed by Rory. He looked like he was concentrating really hard on the traffic ahead.

"I'm sure you have all heard of Greek mythology, right?"

I don't know why but I said, "Right" aloud. Kelsey laughed and I smacked her shoulder.

"Well, I'm sure you also know a lot about Greek gods and goddesses, too, right?" I made sure not to respond this time.

"Well they are all real. Every single one, and so are all of the stories. They may have happened a long time ago, but they happened. And guess what? One of the gods are your mom or dad, depending on who your mortal parent is."

"What!" I yelled in disbelief.

"Shhh!" Rory shushed. I didn't get quiet.

"My mom's a police officer, and my stepdad is some sort of school counselor. There's nothing really 'godly' about either of them."

"He means your biological dad," Kelsey clarified.

"What are you talking about? My dad was just another deadbeat who left his pregnant girlfriend and child behind. He was killed by a group of gang members, and last time I checked gods are immortal or whatever." Rory sighed and hit the fast forward button. When he pressed play the recording said,

"If you are one of those people who believe your parent is dead, I assure you, they aren't. You see the gods are very busy and cannot stay with their mortal lovers or children. In fact, it's be surprising if you'd ever meet your godly parent. Each of them have made a pact with one another not to interfere in the lives of their demigod children. But, do not fret. Your parent may still love you and will show you by claiming you by the time you turn thirteen." My throat went dry. I tried to swallow but when I did I felt as if a lump was caught in my throat. I was almost sixteen. Did this mean that my real dad, who had been secretly alive for the past fifteen years, didn't love me? My eyes started to burn again. I focused on the recording, not wanting to cry in front of the others.

"And that brings us to our next topic. The Mist." My eyes got watery, and I found it hard to focus on the tapes while I tried to suck tears back in through my tear ducts. From what I did hear though, the Mist was some sort of invisible force that made normal people see things differently from what is actually happening. All demigods, which is what I am now I guess, can see through it and some mortals can as well. I deduced that none of my family could due to my mother's dismissal of every strange thing that had occurred before.

"Now that you have been given a chance to let this information sink in, I'm sure you're thinking 'wow, I'm a freak. I'll never make any friends'. Well that's not true. You can still live a normal-ish human life as long as you're careful, train hard, and watch out for

monsters. And even if you don't make any normal friends, I'm sure you will make good friends at Camp Halfblood. Everyone there has gone through the same things as you. Whether it'd be being kicked out of multiple school, never truly fitting in, or having ADHD and dyslexia, I can assure you, you aren't the only one out there. And even if by some odd chance you don't make any friends at Camp Halfblood I'll be your friend un-

"Don't do it he's an addict!" a second unrecognizable voice cut in.

"Shut up, Anzu!" recording voice Rory yelled. Rory quickly punched the fast forward button and the disc player whirred. He had a tight grip on the steering wheel and looked quite guilty. He pressed play again.

"Grab his stash! Run, Lit!" There was a grunt and the sound of the microphone hitting the ground. Rory once again fast forwarded the disk.

"I told them to take this part out," he grunted.

"You sounded like you had a real problem there, Rory," Kelsey said smugly.

"Shut it, Blondie," Rory growled. The disk player clicked, signaling the end of the tape. "Sounds like the end. You can do the rest." Kelsey nodded and turned back to me.

"Any questions?" She asked. I had a ton but they were all spinning around in a huge disorganized mess in my head. I picked out a few I thought were most important.

"So, when I see things can you guys see them too? And what are they?"

"Yes and monsters. If you knew what you were or what potential you had they'd all flock to you in a heartbeat and kill you. And now that we've told you, it's probably like a flare light was sent out and more monsters can probably sense you now."

"Why did you tell me then!? Now I'm in more danger!?" I shrieked. Rory held a hand to his right ear.

"Volume down. Geez," Rory grunted, "We told you because we knew more would have come anyways. The older you get the stronger your scent is. It's not something you can simply cover up by hiding the truth." I was about to ask him what was he talking about, but Rory continued to speak.

"It's happened to everyone at camp. Everyone has been chased by monsters and eventually, with help, ended up at Camp Halfblood."

"Halfblood?"

"Yes, it's another term for demigod. That's what you are. And that's what I am."

"Who's your parent?"

"Ares."

"Ares? Who's that?" He looked at me through the rear view mirror like I was crazy.

"Ares. The god of war. The most badass god of them all."

"Oh," I said, still not entirely understanding, but not wanting to sound stupid, "What about Kelsey? Is she a demigod?"

"Yep. Daughter of Tyche, the goddess of luck," Kelsey answered, "That's why you guys shouldn't worry about monster appearances. I'm your lucky charm."

"And yet we've already run into one so far," Rory exhaled.

"Thatâ€¦ Doesn't count."

"Sure it doesn't," Rory said rolling his eyes. He shifted in his seat, sitting more upright. It was getting late which made it even more dangerous to be on the road.

"Do we get any cool powers like the gods in the movies? Like if Zeus was my dad could I send lightning bolts from my eyes?" Kelsey made a face.

"Yes and no. Yes, some of us do possess a few unique abilities that we got from our godly side, and no, it's highly unlikely you'd be the daughter of Zeus. And even when I met one she didn't seem like she could shoot lightning from her eyes. Although her death glare..." Kelsey's voiced trailed off. She looked like she was thinking back on something, so I went back to talking with Rory.

"So if it can't be Zeus then who else could it be? All I know is that there is Zeus, Hera, Hermes, Poseidon, Artemis, and Hades."

"That's all the gods and goddesses you know? You knew Hera, but not Ares?" He asked in a disappointed tone.

"Pretty much. I know there's a love goddess but I forgot her name. Why? Are there more?"

"Tons more, and I don't think I can explain all of them without overwhelming you." He paused looking out the window. We passed a few signs that I tried to read, but we were moving too fast and the letters were too jumbled.

"Hey, there's a bookstore at the exit up ahead. Maybe they will have some books on Greek mythology you could read. I'd hate for you to show up at camp without knowing anything. "

"That'd be pretty convenient," I said. But, with my experiences I knew convenient meant something bad was likely to happen.

**\*\*Stay tuned. Troubles brewin'!\*\***

**\*\*So, one of my friends suggested that I put out one chapter every week rather than whenever I finish them. What do you guys think? Feel free to leave a comment.\*\***

Rory turned and got off the highway. He made a few wrong turns and misread a few signs, but eventually we made it to the bookstore. There was a bright white sign over the door.

"Read-a lot-Rick's," Kelsey read. Rory parked the car.

"I'll be right back." He took out the keys, closed the door and locked it. The sun was going down in the sky turning it purple with fluffy pink clouds. It looked like a kindergartener had scribbled in a coloring book, not caring about accuracy, but instead on which colors looked prettiest. But, all in all it was very beautiful. Kelsey reclined her chair back so far we were practically face to face. She looked seriously worn out even though she hadn't done much except answer questions and tell stories.

"I was up all night yesterday. I was so excited you'd be coming to camp with me." She smiled her goofy grin, and I couldn't help but smile back.

"Well, I'm glad I'm going with you guys," I said. Kelsey yawned and closed her eyes.

"Night- night," she mumbled. I laughed.

"G'nite." And with that Kelsey was out cold. I leaned against the car door and listened to her murmur in her sleep. I tried to go to sleep, too, but couldn't. I was still thinking about who my dad could be. I was both happy he was alive and sad that he hadn't "claimed" me yet. Did he not care? Was he really too busy for me? I mean, I'm his kid right. Certainly he's got time to go 'hey that's my kid'. It didn't have to be big. Even a little note saying 'Hi. I, \_\_, am your father' would have sufficed. But, no. I guess I wasn't good enough. I pouted a little. I started to think of how little I knew about Greek gods and goddesses. Pretty much all of my knowledge came from that one Hercules movie that I haven't seen in years, and the few stories Kelsey had told me at our lunch table. Now, I was starting to regret not listening to all of them. I thought back on the movie and of all of the glowing people who were the gods, with their cloud palace in the sky. I wondered if any of them actually looked like that in real life. I could be any one of their children. I thought of Hades and his blue fire hair. What if I was his daughter? What if I was the daughter of a bad guy? Would that make me a bad guy, too? I shook my head. No, I'd just have to do what all of good guys did. Stand up to my parent and tell them I'd stop them.

"\_\_Pfft. Who am I kidding? I can't stand up to anybody," \_\_ I thought to myself, "\_\_That's rule number 2." \_\_I could only hope my dad wasn't some sort of manipulative sociopath. Gold eyes and black hair. Those were the features I had inherited, and those were the features he would have.

I looked to the store. I saw Rory through the glass door, leaning against the counter, chatting with the woman behind it. I couldn't help but feel a twinge of jealousy every time he would give her a half smile or made her giggle. It felt like they were talking forever.

"Hurry up," I grumbled throwing my head into the back of Rory's seat. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a figure move in the shadows. I sat up, hardening my gaze. Not only was it hard to see because it was nighttime, but also because the street light above us was out. As far as I could tell the moving thing was tall enough to reach my mid-thigh. It didn't move in a straight line but instead in a swerved motion. As the figure came into the dim light of the store I realized it was a dog. A bloodhound with big droopy eyes and long floppy ears wobbled into the light. A large black spot sat on its back, and its big black nose sniffed the ground in search for some unknown thing. The dog picked up its head and looked directly at me. Its red eyes were so bright I could have sworn they glowed. The dog barked, and bared its yellow teeth. Kelsey jolted forward from her sleep, eyes filled with alarm.

"Monster!" she cried. The dog howled, the echo of the call striking fear into my core. Even though my door was closed I could still hear its barks clearly. It had found its prey and now it was going in for the kill. The dog snarled and ran at the car. I screamed as it jumped at my window. There was a bang, and I scrambled back to the opposite side of the car. I could tell it had made a dent in Rory's car. The dog stood on its hind legs, black claws scratching against the window pane. Its beady eyes peered through the glass. They seemed to narrow at me. The dog dropped down, and disappeared from sight. Before I knew it, the dog was behind me at the other window. I yelped and Kelsey screamed.

"This isn't good," she cried.

"No duh!" I yelled angrily. Kelsey started opening Rory's glove compartment and center console, urgently looking for something. Rory, who had noticed the hound attacking his car, rushed out the store with two books, and his wallet in hand. As he came close to the car the dog ran at him barking loudly. Rory raised his arms up, carefully circling around the dog, and back to the car. The dog lowered its head and snarling angrily at the boy. Rory was calm, despite being practically pinned against the car by the dog. Rory slowly placed the books on top of the car, opened his wallet, and pulled a small shiny rectangle out. It was a credit card.

\_"Great. What's he going to do bribe it with money?"\_

"Get in the car!" I shouted, scared I was going to have to watch my new friend get mauled to death. But, instead of getting in the car, where it was safe and we could just drive away, Rory turned around and winked.

\_"\_\_What the-?" \_Before I could finish the thought, I saw the card began to change and shift in his hand. Rory flipped it, and as it twirled upwards the card grew larger and thicker. Once it had reach the peak of its height, the new object's momentum slowed. I saw what was once a credit card was now a large bronze shield. Upon seeing Rory's sudden movement, the dog took the offensive. The hound launched itself at Rory, fangs out. The new weight of Rory's shield brought it down just in time for him to grab the shield, and block the attack. But the bloodhound was as heavy as it was strong. When it hit Rory's shield it knocked him back into the car.

"Rory!" I shouted, tension rising. The dog snarled and scratched at



the shield, its teeth coming inches from Rory's face. I looked back at Kelsey, who seemed just as scared as me. "What do we do?" Kelsey swallowed, and gave me an anxious smile.

"It'll be okay. Rory knows what he's doing," Kelsey said, a poor attempt at reassurance. I looked back to the fight. Rory grunted, and using all of his body weight, he shoved the dog back with his shield. The dog quickly regained its balance and Rory took a defensive stance. I noticed that at some point Rory had pulled a knife out, and was gripping it tightly. With a shield in one hand, a dagger in the other, and a look of determination on his face, Rory looked like an entirely different person. With new weapons at Rory's disposal, the murder hound behaved more cautiously. It was strange. I knew that despite their name, bloodhounds were gentle creatures that were used to sniff out drugs or follow a scent. They weren't vicious attack dogs like this one. I doubt other dogs had the same look of calculating murderous intent in their eyes either. The dog paced, looking for the perfect place to strike. Rory, however, was less patient.

"Come on!" Rory roared, his voice almost as clear as the dog's. He struck his dagger against his shield, trying to goad the dog into attacking. The clanging noise rang out, irritating the blood hounds sensitive ears. The dog whined, shaking its head. Rory's tactic worked. The dog rushed at Rory. Rory held his shield up. The dog jumped as high as it could. Unfortunately for it, that rash decision was all it took for the tables to turn in Rory's favor. Rory twisted his body and smacked his shield into the flying dog so hard the dog shot back five feet. The dog smacked against the ground and skidded backward. The dog tried to stand up, but Rory was on it in seconds. He pinned the dog down with all his weight so it couldn't get up. My vision started to get hazy. I rubbed my eyes in an attempt to get them to refocus, but my attempts were futile. Warped circles filled my vision and merged at one point. The dog's heaving chest. The world took on a washed out effect, the color draining away. But, that didn't matter. My focus was on the creature's vulnerable vital point. I watched as Rory flipped his dagger downward to get a better grip on the handle, and plunged it into the beast's chest. The dog whined, unable to move from its pinned position, its death inevitable. In a final attempt of retaliation, the dog snapped onto Rory's dagger arm. It bit down as hard as it could, but Rory wasn't fazed. Rory twisted the dagger into the beast's chest, and with one final whimper it died. Rory pulled the dog's jaw from his arm and stood. As he walked back to the car I watched as the dog's corpse shimmered, and turned into a large pile of dust. The wind must have picked up because the dust disappeared like the distortion in my vision. Rory flipped his shield up, and when it came back down, it returned to a credit card. He slid his dagger back into a sheath and slipped it into the waistband of his pants. Kelsey sat back, gripping her chest. Had it not been for her heavy breathing I would have thought she died of a heart attack. The woman from behind the counter in the store looked at us in both alarm and confusion.

\_"What did she see? Does she think Rory just killed some stray?" \_ Rory grabbed the door handle to get in, but when he pulled, the door jammed. The dog must have done a lot more damage than I had thought. Rory gave the door a few more frustrated jerks, but it barely budged. Rory hung his head and pressed his fingers to the bridge of his nose. He must have let out a very long sigh, because when he looked up he took a huge breath. Rory slammed his right foot against my car door,

and pulled his with all his might. The door finally popped open, swinging all the way back, and making Rory rebalance himself. Rory grabbed the books, climbed in the car, and slammed the door shut. He jammed his wallet in his pocket, anger apparent. He looked to the back where I was sitting and groaned. He pounded his fists against the steering wheel.

"He even cracked my window. Do you even know how much that costs!?" He whipped around to Kelsey, glaring at the blonde, "What was all that talk about being good luck and not worrying about monsters?"

"I was asleep!" Kelsey retorted. She crossed her arms over her chest defensively.

"With Penelope in the car? What if that thing had gotten in?"

"I would have handled it!"

"Yeah, right. You barely did anything just now," He said angrily.

"I couldn't find my sword!"

"And whose fault is that? You probably packed it away in the trunk with everything else!"

"Guys! Guys! Don't fight! Please," I pleaded. It was bad enough some demon dog just tried to kill us, I didn't need my friends to go at each other throats, too. Kelsey just clicked her teeth and turned away from Rory. Rory took a deep breath and rested his head against the steering wheel, trying to calm down from all of the adrenaline pumping through him. He opened the center console and reached in. I heard the crinkle of plastic, and Rory pulled out three suckers. He tossed one to me, which I caught, and one to Kelsey, which bounced off the side of her face. She glared back at him, but took the candy. I put my sucker in my pocket to save it for later.

"Would you mind telling me what that was?" I asked, as Rory tore his wrapper off with his teeth. He popped the candy in his mouth, and pushed it to the side of his mouth.

"Laelaps. The dog who is destined to always catch her prey," Rory said, his voice softer than before.

Kelsey pointed to the woman in the store, "I think your little girlfriend is calling the cops." Rory looked up to see that the woman who he was talking to before was in fact on the phone now, staring directly at us.

"We need to get to camp, quickly," Rory said, pulled out of the parking space.

"No duh," Kelsey mumbled. She sounded hurt, and I wanted to comfort her, but I didn't know how. I decided to just leave her alone for now. I turned around, not believing what just happened. I had a ton of questions, and wasted no time dumping them on the only one who didn't look too peeved to answer them.

"Rory, how did you do that back there? And how did your credit card turn into a shield? And why did the dog turn to dust? Why are we its prey?" Rory exhaled loudly, the long and winded exhale that would

have made you think a part of his soul flew out with his breath.

"Look, Pen. It's getting late, why don't you get some rest. I'll explain more tomorrow," he said, unable to keep the exhaustion from his voice.

"Promise?" I asked.

"Promise," Rory replied, sincerity blending in with the fatigue. I smiled. "Oh, and here's your books." Rory pushed the books towards me.

"Oh! Thank you. What do I owe you?" I asked fishing out my wallet from my pocket.

"Hmm? You don't have to pay me. Just return the books when you're done."

"Oh, okay." I smiled at his generosity, and took the books from him. In the small amount of light, I had I read the titles. One was "Great Greek Myths for Kids" while the other was "Guide to Greek Mythology". I decided that it would be best if I waited until the sun came back up before I started reading. I had been scolded before for trying to read in the dark and was forced to eat carrots in everything for an entire month as punishment. Also, nearly dying left me feeling drained. I shifted my body in a way that I could lay across all of the seats comfortably, and closed my eyes. I didn't think I'd go to sleep so quickly because I still had tons of questions, but after a few seconds I was out.

\*\*I do not condone animal cruelty. That being said, I hope you guys enjoyed this little fight scene. \*\*

End  
file.